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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6742
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0637
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4175
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7727
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5287
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 1161
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1073
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 001060

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DEPT FOR EAP/MLS, DRL, AND IO
PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2017

TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM BM

SUBJECT: AUNG SAN SUU KYI MEETS WITH REGIME LIAISON

RANGOON 00001060 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: P/E Chief Leslie Hayden for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Aung San Suu Kyi met with newly appointed liaison Aung Kyi at the Government Guest House the afternoon of October 25. Burmese State Television announced Acting PM Thein Sein would be appointed Prime Minister and that Quarter Master General LT GEN Tin Aung Myint Oo would replace Thein Sein as Secretary 1 of the SPDC. The regime also announced Aung Kyi's appointment as Labor Minister, in addition to his position as liaison to Aung San Suu Kyi. A coalition of ethnic cease-fire groups announced their endorsement of a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi. ICRC continues to be denied access to political prisoners and may soon embark on a public campaign for access. Activist Toe Kyaw Hlaing has taken over the leadership of 88 Generation Students since the arrest of Htay Kywe and the group is planning a boycott of businesses owned by the generals and their families. End summary.

Aung San Suu Kyi Meets with Government Liaison

¶2. (SBU) Embassy employees observed an armed convoy leave Aung San Suu Kyi's house, en route to the Government Guest House, at 1400 on October 25. The convoy returned to her house at 1530. A reliable source told us she met with newly appointed liaison and Labor Minister Aung Kyi. Officials at her National League for Democracy Party were not informed of the meeting and neither were officials at the MFA. The German Ambassador had a brief conversation with Aung Kyi yesterday. The Ambassador said Aung Kyi admitted he had not yet met with Aung San Suu Kyi, but incoherently mumbled when asked when he would meet her.

New Prime Minister

¶3. (SBU) On October 24, state television announced a series of new cabinet-level appointments including the selection of Lieutenant General Thein Sein as Prime Minister and

Lieutenant General Tin Aung Myint Oo as Secretary 1 of the State Peace and Development Council. The regime's hand-picked liaison to Aung San Suu Kyi, General Aung Kyi, was promoted to Labor Minister from Deputy Minister. He is expected to retain his position as liaison. Generals Thein Htay, Kyaw Saw Khine, and Thein Hun were named Deputy Ministers of Defense, Industry, and Communications respectively.

¶4. (C) Thein Sein has been the Acting Prime Minister since May 18, 2007, a post he held concurrently with his position as Secretary 1. He had tried to pass on this assignment claiming ill health (heart problems). Thein Sein has also served as the Chairman of the National Convention's Convening Committee and is known to be a patron of the USDA.

¶5. (C) Tin Aung Myint Oo holds the title of "Thiha Thura" for bravery in battle. He served as the Northeastern Regional Commander and was the military's Quartermaster General at the time of his appointment as Secretary 1. Tin Aung Myint Oo is known as an efficient and skilled manager, capable of getting things done for the regime. Tin Aung Myint Oo was recently appointed Chairman of the National Trade Council after Number 2 General Maung Aye stepped down from this position. Reliable sources tell us he is close to Maung Aye.

Regime Preparing for Another Mass Rally

¶6. (C) Embassy staff and contacts reported authorities have ordered local families and schools to contribute people to attend an October 31 rally in Rangoon to support the regime's "roadmap to democracy." One Embassy staff member told us officials ordered teachers at his daughter's middle school to fail any student who does not attend the rally. Families

RANGOON 00001060 002.2 OF 003

with more than six members reportedly have been told to provide at least two people to participate in the demonstration or pay others to attend in their place. This is a common tactic the regime uses to recruit participants for its pro-regime rallies. Other contacts told us the regime has demanded local monasteries also contribute monks to attend, although we have been unable to independently confirm this.

Ethnic Groups Endorse Dialogue

¶7. (C) Officials from the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) confirmed as genuine an October 22 statement by a consortium of ethnic ceasefire groups called the Peace and Development Front. The statement criticized the regime's crackdown and welcomed the UN's role as mediator while criticizing the imposition of sanctions on Burma. NLD spokesman U Thein Nyunt said that while the party does not agree with the Peace and Development Front's position on sanctions, it welcomes the statement as a significant and important first step towards true unity and reconciliation. Thein Nyunt pointed out the NLD recognizes the need to include all ethnic minorities in the democratic process and said the statement comes at a time when change is urgently needed. Our KIO sources said the Peace and Development Front was formed six years ago and consists of representatives from the United Wa State Army, Myanmar National Democracy Alliance, National Democracy Alliance Army, and Democratic Army Kachin State Special Region.

ICRC Frustrated, May Go Public

¶8. (C) ICRC Head of Delegation Pierre-Andre Conod told Poloff the ICRC is increasingly pessimistic the regime will reverse course and allow the group unfettered access to prisoners. He described an October 23 meeting at the Ministry of Home Affairs as particularly unhelpful, pointing out that the Home Minister and Chief of Police failed even to attend as promised. The low-level officials who did meet with them refused to discuss the possibility of renewing unescorted prison visits, choosing instead to criticize the ICRC for its efforts to help families obtain information on the welfare and whereabouts of their missing relatives. According to Conod, as a result, ICRC's Geneva headquarters is considering abandoning its efforts to resolve the issue quietly and may instead issue a formal "offer of assistance" publicly calling on the government to address this issue. Despite these difficulties, Conod reported the ICRC is undeterred and will continue to ask the government to provide family members with information about missing or detained loved ones.

88 Generation Regrouping

¶9. (C) Since the arrest of 88 Generation Students (88GS) leader Htay Kywe, pro-democracy activist Toe Kyaw Hlaing has taken over the leadership of the organization. Toe Kyaw Hlaing is a close friend of Htay Kywe who previously preferred to play a quiet, background role in the movement. He no longer has that luxury he informed pol/econ chief today. Toe Kyaw Hlaing said 88GS is preparing to call for a mass-boycott of all businesses in Burma owned or operated by the senior generals and their families. They are compiling the list and plan to publicize it before the end of the month. They will target local businesses such as Max Cola which is owned by Than Shwe's daughter.

¶10. (C) Toe Kyaw Hlaing said 88 Generation Students still desires to meet with SE Gambari and UN Special Rapporteur Pinheiro when they next visit Burma. Toe Kyaw Hlaing said that if they are granted a meeting they will make the

RANGOON 00001060 003.2 OF 003

following points: The UN Should establish a UN observer office in Rangoon that can independently verify reports of human rights violations rather than relying on UNDP, which has lost the trust of the pro-democracy activists; If the regime is sincere about initiating a genuine dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, Than Shwe or Liaison Aung Kyi should meet with her before Gambari returns to Burma and this process needs a reasonable timetable; More pressure should be put on China, India, and Russia to engage with all the country's people, in addition to the generals.

¶11. (C) Toe Kyaw Hlaing stressed that the 88 Generation Students continue to seek a dialogue with the Chinese, but are repeatedly rebuffed. Anti-Chinese sentiment in Burma is increasing, he noted, with rumors of plans to attack Chinese-owned businesses on the rise.

¶12. (C) Toe Kyaw Hlaing related the regime has gained better intelligence on their organization from the interrogations they are conducting on recently arrested political activists. He said their money sources have almost completely dried up. Toe Kyaw Hlaing explained that 88 Generation received money regularly from the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) and Marie Perinova, a close aide to former Czech President Vaclav Havel, through Burma's informal Hamdi system. The two Hamdi bankers whom they received the money from were both recently arrested. One was released due to a prison administrative error and immediately left the country. As a result, their cash supply has dried up. Embassy Rangoon is considering how we might assist. Toe Kyaw Hlaing also said the regime is zeroing in on the activists' internet accounts; we can provide assistance here. Many of them have been arrested after arranging meetings or giving their

whereabouts to friends and family via the internet.

Comment

¶13. (C) We are encouraged the regime has finally initiated dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, and now must insist that she have the opportunity to talk to others than just the generals. Than Shwe wants to gain credit for these minor steps, and we must keep pushing for more than gestures. End comment.

VILLAROSA